



# Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure (HD2 and HD9)

## **FASD in the Classroom**

Identifying the Issues  
Recognizing the Resources  
Developing Strategies for Supporting Student Success:  
Proactive Plan for Success  
Crisis Intervention Plan

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## **Good Teaching Practices**

- Looking at them differently
- No one strategy will always work
- Think out of the box
- Focus on the goal

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## **Key Concepts**

**External Brain**

**Can't vs. Won't**

**More than one way to teach a student**

**Force success**

**Bad vs. stupid**

**Impulsivity/ Rage**

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### What is FASD?

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
  - Actual physical damage to the brain
  - Irreversible
  - Can lead to secondary mental health disabilities due to life long frustration
  - **Hope- with supports in place, people with FASD can be successful!**

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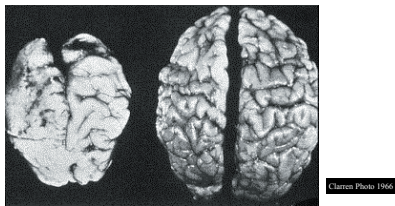
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Don't believe alcohol damages the Baby's Brain?



Brain severely damaged by alcohol

Healthy Brain

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### FASD Related Terms

- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Brain Damage
- Growth Deficiencies
- Facial Features
- Maternal alcohol consumption

- FAE- Fetal Alcohol Effects
  - Hidden disability
  - Less visible, NOT less severe
  - Greater risk for development of **secondary** mental health characteristics

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
  - Not a diagnostic term
  - Umbrella term
  - **Includes all alcohol related medical diagnoses**
  - Encompasses FAS and FAE as well

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# Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure (HD2 and HD9)

**The student with FASD may have:**

- Normal features
- Normal growth patterns
- Normal intelligence
- **A hidden disability!**

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**Keep in mind:**

Alcohol causes actual physical damage to the brain.  
Not all student problems are due to prenatal exposure to alcohol.

**You do not need to know whether a child is affected in order to implement beneficial classroom strategies.**

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**Your Role**

- It is your role to teach each child
- It is NOT your role to diagnose
  - An FASD diagnosis is medical, not educational
  - The Parent must agree to diagnose; must be ready and willing

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How does Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol affect students in school?




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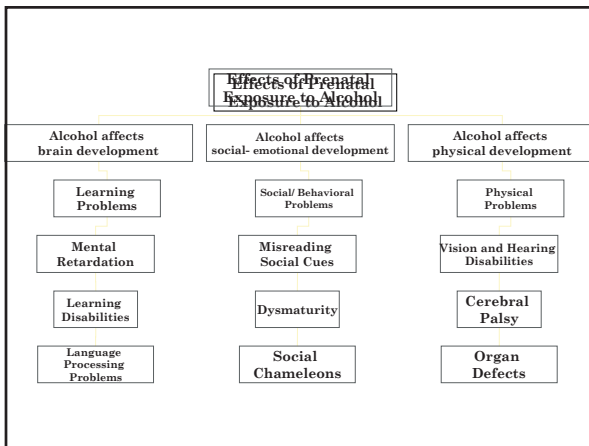
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It can affect their ability to:

- Learn as a result of brain damage
  - Mental retardation
    - Alcohol exposure is the single highest cause of mental retardation
    - However: Most people with prenatal exposure are NOT retarded
  - Learning disabilities
    - Language processing difficulties
    - Learning differences

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# Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure (FASD and FAS)

## It can affect their ability to:

- Get along with others due to sensory damage
  - Prenatal exposure to alcohol affects sensitivity:
    - To touch 
    - To sounds 
    - To smells 
    - To textures 
    - To visual stimulation 
    - To tastes 

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## It can affect their ability to:

- Follow directions due to language difficulty
  - They may be able to hear
  - They may be able to repeat directions
  - They may NOT be able to understand directions
  - They may NOT be able to follow more than one or two directions at a time

NEVER ASSUME UNDERSTANDING  
UNDERSTANDING ≠ BEHAVIOR

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## It can affect their ability to:

- Pay Attention
  - They may be easily distracted
  - They may focus on only part of the information and get 'lost' if there is a lot of information given



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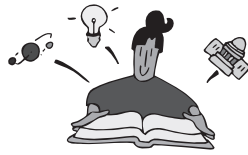
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It can affect their ability to:

- Understand Information
  - Even though they may be smart, the way they process information can be affected

**Smart is only part of the problem.**



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Learning Issues

**Remember there is actual physical damage to the brain**

- Learning difficulties
- Language processing difficulties
  - Comprehension
  - Questions
- Poor short term memory
- Difficulty recalling stored information
- Difficulty with abstract concepts
  - Time
  - Money

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Physical Issues

- Physical disabilities
- Coordination difficulties
- May need to focus on one modality at a time (PE can be challenging)
- May have a greater need for physical activity
- May have a difficult time 'switching gears' and transitioning

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# Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure (HD2 and HE9)

## Behavioral Issues

- Impulsivity
- Dysmaturity
- Transition Issues
- Difficulty with cause and effect
  - Requires memory processing
  - Requires concept of time

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## Social Issues

- Difficulty comprehending social situations
  - Personal space
  - Language processing difficulties
  - Higher expressive language than receptive
- Hyper or hypo sensitive
- Impulsive
- Friendly

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## Emotional Issues

- Students with FASD may be at a very different functioning level emotionally, intellectually, behaviorally, physically...
- They may be affected by environment and situations to a greater degree
  - Under the best circumstances students with FASD must use greater effort to 'maintain'
  - Under stressful situations they may 'overload' and shut down

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### FASD and Our Students

- FASD impacts the students
  - Affected students
  - Non- affected students
- FASD impacts instruction
  - Delivery model
  - Pacing and scheduling
- FASD impacts teaching
  - Strategies
  - Frustrations
  - Successes

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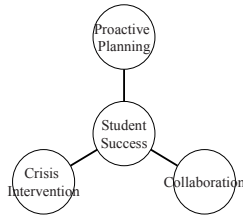
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### For Student Success:

- Planning for situations ahead of time- Proactive Plan
- Planning for the inevitable- Crisis Intervention Plan



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### Fair Does Not Mean the Same

- Fair means equal.  
Sometimes, some students need accommodations in order to have the same **FAIR** chance at success as others.

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# Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure (HD2 and HE9)

## Working with Parents

- Parents know their child best
- Parents want children to be successful
- Parents **may be affected** by prenatal exposure to alcohol
- Parents need support, not criticism

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## Working with Parents

A student's home environment has a profound impact on the child's success in school, however...

- Even though a student may come from a home where there are social problems,
  - It does not mean we can accept failure for that student
  - It makes it MORE incumbent upon us to do whatever it takes to help that student succeed.

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## Working with Parents

- Focus on:
    - The needs of the student, not the disability
    - Strategies that do/ might work
    - Specific issues that affect the student's success in the classroom
- We need to remember parents and teachers want the same thing- student success**

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### Working with Parents

- Teaching children with prenatal exposure to alcohol is challenging, however
- PARENTING children with prenatal exposure is even a greater challenge
  - Even parents who are in the best of situations struggle with meeting the needs of the affected child
  - They deal with more than normal frustrations
    - Children's behaviors and needs
    - Misunderstandings of others
  - They need support, not judgment

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*Secondary Characteristics- or what we can avoid or diminish with supported success:  
(develop over time from chronic poor "fit" with home, school, work, community environment)*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| • Fatigue, frustration  | • Isolation- fewer and fewer friends          |
| • Anxiety, fearfulness  | • Aggressive Behavior- Rage                   |
| • Rigidity, resistance  | • Truancy, trouble with the law, running away |
| • Appear to not care, show no facial expressions, <b>shutdown</b> | • Addiction                                   |
| • Poor self concept, feelings of failure and low self esteem      | • Depression, self-destruction, suicide       |
|   | • Mental illness                              |

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### Classroom Considerations

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

Focus on the ultimate goal:

**STUDENT SUCCESS**

**Think out of the box.**

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# Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure (HD2 and HD9)

**Classroom Considerations**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

Predictable trouble spots for students with prenatal exposure to alcohol

Some strategies for dealing with them

**Remember- being proactive is much more effective than being reactive!**

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**Classroom Considerations: Why?**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Teachers deal with the manifestations of prenatal exposure to alcohol
- Dealing with them effectively benefits everyone
- Many issues are not disciplinary unless we make them so
- Many students **can't** rather than **won't**

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**Classroom Considerations: Why?**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- We can not change the brain damage
- We can modify settings and instruction
- Some students will **always** need modifications, even as adults; people never outgrow FASD
- **“Old enough to know better” does not work here**
- Students can and must be taught to recognize and facilitate the strategies that help them learn in order to be successful

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Classroom Considerations:  
Three Essentials  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Respect
- Structure
- Support

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Classroom Considerations:  
Behaviors  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- FASD does not make unacceptable behaviors acceptable; it does put them in a new light
- Change the environment, not the child
- Being aware of FASD helps us be proactive rather than reactive
  - Example- a child hits another child after being brushed up against
    - A discipline issue?
    - A sensory issue?
    - Both?

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Classroom Considerations:  
Strategies  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Strategies that may be different but may help:
  - Using the overhead
  - Reading with younger students
  - Listening to a tape
  - Sitting in a bean bag chair
  - Using smelly markers

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# Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure (HD2 and HE9)

**Classroom Considerations: Environment**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Environmental Issues
  - Seating/ lying/standing
  - Noises : are the lights buzzing?
  - Temperature of the room
  - Personal space
  - Room decorations
  - Board/ overhead

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**Classroom Considerations: Structure**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Organize the day
  - Minimize transitions
  - Allow for breaks
    - Consider all sensory areas
  - Practice routines
  - Provide visual reminders for classroom routines to assist students
  - Reduce clutter (distractions)
  - Build in low stimulation areas in the classroom
    - Consider all sensory areas

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**Classroom Considerations: Rules**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Keep rules to a minimum
- Phrase positively
- Practice often- not just at the beginning of the year
- Don't assume anything!!!
  - Because a student can repeat the rules
  - Does not mean s/he understands the rules
  - OR knows how to act when following the rule
  - Be specific, concrete, repetitive (often!)

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**Classroom Considerations:  
Reward Systems**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Students with FASD don't always 'get' reward systems
- Reward systems are abstract
- They rely on a sense of cause and effect
- They assume constant working memory for requirements



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**Classroom Considerations:  
Rewards**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Allow the class to earn rewards even if certain students are not able to accomplish the task
  - Example: Class earns points as individual students exhibit desired behavior. When \_\_\_\_\_ students are caught performing desired behavior, the class earns a reward.
  - This takes the onus off of the student who cannot (rather than will not) earn enough points individually.
  - This encourages students to keep trying.

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**Classroom Considerations:  
Rewards**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

Allow rewards to be earned WHEN, not IF a certain state is reached

- Example: When \_\_\_ homework assignments are completed, the class earns... Rather than if everyone completes homework this week...
- This prevents one student from 'blowing it' for the class
- This encourages cooperation

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# Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure (HD2 and HE9)

## Classroom Considerations

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Lying and Language Processing- avoid labels
  - Students with FASD tend to be very literal
  - Often respond differently to the same question
    - If you ask it differently or again
    - On a different day
    - At a different time
    - Worded differently
- This has more to do with literal translation than lying
- Rather than the wrong answer, the wrong question
- Don't try to 'catch' kids; it's too easy
- Use statements rather than questions if the information is known

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## Classroom Considerations: Cause and Effect

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

### Don't ask why

- Often students do not know
- Often students act on impulse
- Often students will try desperately to give you the answer they think you are looking for or repeat one they've heard
- Often IT DOESN'T MATTER at the moment; it will only complicate the issue
- Debrief at another time

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## Classroom Considerations: Lining Up

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Students with FASD often have difficulty standing in line because
  - They may be oversensitive to being touched
  - They may be distractible
  - They may have difficulty standing still without rearranging their bodies in space

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**Classroom Considerations:  
Lining Up**

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Put student having difficulty at the back of the line
  - They can see everyone else and don't need to turn around
  - They can avoid being touched
  - If they are wiggling, the rest of the line might not know!

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**Classroom Considerations:  
Rules**

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Talk in Positives
  - Students may only hear part of the direction
  - Make sure they hear what you want them to do!  
*Example: Say, "Walk in the classroom", rather than, "Don't run".*  
*They may only hear run!*

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**Classroom Considerations:  
Recess**

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Give students the option of staying in if they do not feel they can have a successful recess
- Allow them to pick a buddy to stay in with them to encourage development of social skills
- Provide an out on the playground

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# Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure (HD2 and HE9)

## Classroom Considerations: Transitions

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Changing Classes
  - Have students pass either before or after other students to avoid difficult situations
  - Have students carry heavy backpack, pile of books or materials

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## Classroom Considerations: Lunch

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Make eating in the cafeteria optional
- Offer a quiet area for lunch and to recharge
- Use the time to further develop social skills

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## Classroom Considerations: Directions

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus



### Oral Directions

- Give directions
- Repeat key words
- Position yourself near the student
- Use visual cues

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### Classroom Considerations: Arrangement

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

#### Seating

- Back or front?
- Some students will be less distracted in the BACK of the room where they can see everything and have no need to turn around



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### Classroom Considerations: Class Prep

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

#### Coming to Class Prepared

- Reminders in locker
- Reminders outside classroom
- Reminders in binder
- Buddy system

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### Classroom Considerations: Homework

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Set a time limit to reduce frustration
- Alternate assignments
- Shorter assignments: Quality not quantity
- Focused on specific skills

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# Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure (HD2 and HE9)

## Classroom Considerations:

### Homework

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Getting homework home
  - Checklist at the end of the day
  - Buddy system
  - After school activities support
  - Fax
- Getting homework to school
  - Bring directly to class
  - Fax
  - Buddy system
  - E-mail

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## Classroom Considerations

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

### Dealing with Frustration

- Recognize
  - Be aware of signs, if any
  - Teach student and buddies to be aware
- Prevent
  - Teach strategies for reducing frustration
- Intervene
  - Plan ahead
  - Acceptable choices for reducing frustration
- Resume activity after cool- down

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## Classroom Considerations:

### Staying on Task

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Self- Monitoring
  - Self awareness
  - Intermittent tape
  - Goal setting
- Supported
  - Modified assignments
  - Smaller increments
  - Built in breaks

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**Classroom Considerations:**  
**Grading**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

**Grading Papers**

- Consider the impact
  - Papers covered in red marks
  - Papers which draw attention to what was done right

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**Classroom Considerations:**  
**Stress**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

**Reduce Stress**

- Students learn better when they are NOT under stress- stress diminishes learning potential
- Students with FASD experience greater levels of stress

**Empower the students**

- Teach relaxation strategies
- Utilize Brain Gym strategies

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**Classroom Considerations:**  
**Need to Move**  
by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

**Fidgeting**

- Busy hands and feet
  - Appropriate activities
    - Sandpaper under desk
    - Squeeze- its
    - Bare feet, textured rugs



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# Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure (HD2 and HE9)

## Classroom Considerations: Physical Contact

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Inappropriate touches
  - Practice
  - Respond consistently
  - Teach and reteach acceptable touches and responses
    - Giver and receiver
- Higher threshold
  - More to make impact
  - Sensory need for input

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## Classroom Considerations: Handwriting

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

- Wipe off sheets
- Dry erase boards
- Alternatives to writing
  - Typing
  - Dragon Speak

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## Classroom Considerations: Breakdown

by Jeanne Gerhardt-Cyrus

When a situation with a student with FASD is confusing and the intervention is not working, then:

- Stop!
- Take a break.
- Observe.
- Debrief afterwards: What would help?  
Listen carefully to identify the problem.

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### External Brain

If a child's legs do not work, we give the child braces...  
the external brain is like braces for the brain!

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### Support

- Support each other
  - Vent
  - Share successes and failures
  - Safeguards confidentiality
  - Respect the student and family
- Support students
- Support parents- we are all in this together

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Please Remember:

**Children are not 'FAS'!**  
**Children are children.**  
**Some are affected by prenatal alcohol exposure.**

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*Educating Bush Students Who May Have Prenatal Exposure  
(HD2 and HE9)*

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